

only reward I will aspire to at the end of my mandate. This is no time for hesitation or doubt. This is a moment for decisions and courage. Long and difficult is the road leading to the Colombia we yearn for. Let us begin now! Tomorrow will be another day!

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, September 21, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,510,750,292,549.80 (Five trillion, five hundred ten billion, seven hundred fifty million, two hundred ninety-two thousand, five hundred forty-nine dollars and eighty cents).

Five years ago, September 21, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,392,902,000,000 (Four trillion, three hundred ninety-two billion, nine hundred two million).

Ten years ago, September 21, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,596,653,000,000 (Two trillion, five hundred ninety-six billion, six hundred fifty-three million).

Fifteen years ago, September 21, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,354,377,000,000 (One trillion, three hundred fifty-four billion, three hundred seventy-seven million).

Twenty-five years ago, September 21, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$459,603,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-nine billion, six hundred three million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,051,147,292,549.80 (Five trillion, fifty-one billion, one hundred forty-seven million, two hundred ninety-two thousand, five hundred forty-nine dollars and eighty cents) during the past 25 years.

SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, in a time of unprecedented economic prosperity, we have seen a reduction in inflation and unemployment yet a full-time minimum wage earner makes almost \$3,000 below the poverty level—a mere \$10,712 per year. No one who works full time should be poor in this country—it's time to raise the minimum wage.

Republicans say that raising the minimum wage will cause job loss and put undue burdens on business owners. But in a recent study conducted by Princeton economists David Card and Alan Krueger, their analysis of New Jersey's minimum wage increase in 1992 showed that employment in fast food restaurants grew at least as quickly as in neighboring Pennsylvania where the minimum wage stayed the same. Also noted in the study was that higher wages actually benefitted employers—turnover expenses were reduced and productivity improved due to better motivated and more stable employees. Mr. President, it's time to raise the minimum wage.

Additionally, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that since the 1996–97 wage increases took effect, 4 million new jobs have been created and unemployment is at 4.5%—its lowest

level in a generation. In fact, a study by the Economic Policy Institute documents that there was no measurable negative effect on jobs. The only measurable effect was on workers—they received the pay increases they deserved. Mr. President, it's time to raise the minimum wage.

Contrary to what has been said by my colleagues on the opposite side of the aisle, workers who will benefit from this increase are not primarily teenagers from high income families. 70% are adults over the age of 20 and forty percent of minimum wage workers are the sole bread winners in their families. As a matter of fact, the average minimum wage earner brings home half of their family's income. Additionally, 60% of minimum wage earners are women. Mr. President, it's time to raise the minimum wage.

In 1979, minimum wage earners needed to work an average of 40 hours per week to stay out of poverty. Today those same workers must work 52 hours. By raising the minimum wage one dollar by the year 2000 we will restore its purchasing power to its mid-1970's level. With unemployment levels 50% to 75% lower and inflation rates 2 to 3 times lower, we can afford to restore that purchasing power. Mr. President, it's time to raise the minimum wage.

It is time to honor the American working people with a fair wage. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Our nation, so richly endowed with natural resources and with a capable and industrious population, should be able to devise ways and means of insuring to all able-bodied working men and women a fair day's pay for a fair day's work." I call upon my colleagues in the Senate to begin narrowing the gap between rich and poor in this country. We must help bring economic prosperity to the men and women who feed our families, care for our children and elderly parents, and play by the rules. It's time to help working families and it's time to raise the minimum wage.

CAL RIPKEN'S STREAK OF PLAYING 2,632 CONSECUTIVE GAMES

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, Sunday, September 20, 1998 marked the end of an era in sports. Cal Ripken, baseball's Iron Man, took a well-deserved day off. As the Baltimore Sun put it, "The Streak died of natural causes. It was 2,632."

Cal Ripken sat in the dugout Sunday night not because of injury, or illness, or a manager's decision. Cal voluntarily took himself out of the lineup because he felt he was not playing up to his own standards, and would not contribute enough to the team. Cal's quietly monumental decision exemplifies the dignity and class with which he has conducted himself throughout his career.

When Cal Ripken began his streak in 1982, Ronald Reagan was President, I was a Congresswoman, "Dallas" was

the most popular TV show, and the movie "ET" was setting box office records. A baby born that year is about to be a junior in high school. Ryan Minor, who played in Cal's place Sunday night, was 8 years old.

I was in the stands September 6, 1995, the night that Cal played game number 2,131. I've watched history being made on the Senate floor, but that night I watched history being made on the glorious green field of Camden Yards. I will never forget the joy we all felt as the banners rolled, the light bulbs flashed, and Cal took his victory lap.

Records are made to be broken, but I can't imagine Cal's record being broken in our lifetime. The next closest player, Albert Belle, would have to play in every game for the next 14 years to equal The Streak.

What Cal has accomplished is simple: Every day for the last 16 years, he got up, got dressed, and went to work. He represents the old-fashioned ethic displayed by millions of Marylanders every day as they work hard, play by the rules, and take care of their families. It's not fancy, it's not flashy, but it is the glue that holds our communities, our society, and our nation together.

So to Cal Ripken, I say hats off, thank you for being you, and thank you for showing all of us how it's supposed to be done."

THE OMNIBUS PATENT ACT OF 1998

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have been working diligently along with Senators DASCHLE, BINGAMAN, CLELAND, BOXER, HARKIN, and LIEBERMAN to get this measure considered and passed by the Senate. It an important measure to America's future.

Along with all the Democratic cosponsors of the bill, I signed on to offering our patent bill as an amendment to this bankruptcy bill. I helped provide an opportunity for this amendment in the unanimous consent agreement accepted by the Senate on Friday September, 11th. It is long past time for the Senate to consider this patent reform legislation.

Unfortunately, Republican opposition to the bill has prevented Senate consideration for more than a year. This is another example of how secret, anonymous holds on the Republican side are preventing important legislation from being considered by the Senate. I deeply regret that those same Republican objections have now succeeded in preventing our Republican cosponsor, the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, from even offering this amendment to the bill in the amendment spot that we had reserved for that purpose. I believe that there is strong support for this measure. I cannot guarantee that all 45 Democratic Senators will vote for it, but I do know that no Democrat has prevented or is now preventing its consideration.